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The Revolt in Canada against Protection

Being a Reprint of the Memorial in favour
of Free Trade presented by the Farmers'
Deputation on December 16th, 1910, to
Sir Wilfrid Laurier.



PUBLISHED BY THE COBDEN CLUB, CAXTON HOUSE,
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1911

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The Revolt in Canada against Protection

EXTRACTS FROM NEWSPAPERS.

The Dominion Parliament was last week overshadowed by a Farmers' Parliament. The former, assembled in the halls of legislation, was for the moment at least completely eclipsed by the assemblage gathered in the Grand Opera House at Ottawa.

At this Farmers' Parliament seven out of nine Provinces were represented, and the membership was estimated by the daily press at from seven to eight hundred. It consisted of representatives from the United Farmers of Alberta, the Grain Growers' Association of Saskatchewan, the Grain Growers' Association of Manitoba, the Grange of Ontario, a delegation from Quebec, and representatives of the Farmers' Association of New Brunswick, and the Fruit Growers' Association of Nova Scotia. All these various bodies are now linked together in a Federal organisation known as the National Council of Agriculture, of which D. W. McCuaig, of Manitoba, is President, and E. C. Drury, of Ontario, Secretary, and it was under the auspices of this National Council that the Farmers' Parliament was held.

The one great question which brought these men together from the shores of the sounding sea to the far-flung prairies was the tariff. On this question all the delegates were of one mind. On this question they united in an unequivocal declaration, a declaration which leaves no further possibility of doubt as to where farmers stand on what is now the paramount issue in Canada.

Other matters were discussed and pronounced upon as well. Some of these are of general interest. Some are of interest chiefly in the West. On all questions there was harmony. On the supreme question there was an earnestness of purpose such as had never before been surpassed in the history of this country.—*From the "Toronto Weekly Sun," December 21st, 1910.*

"We are now going to deal with the tariff."

This was the announcement, made by President McCuaig during the afternoon session of the conference preceding the hearing of the deputation of the Government, which made the convention wholly one. The Ontario and Eastern Province delegates had listened with sympathy and attention to the discussion of purely Western questions for a couple of hours or more before that. But the moment the tariff question was announced a roar as of the Atlantic surge arose; it swept from end to end, and side to side of the auditorium, and in the shouting the voices of Nova Scotia, of New Brunswick, of Quebec, of Ontario, of Manitoba, of Saskatchewan, and of Alberta were blended as one. . . .

The reading of the resolution, clause by clause, by the speaker, evoked fresh outbursts of cheering, the proposal to cut the tariff on British goods in half at once, and to eliminate the balance of the imposts inside of ten years being cheered with especial vigour.—*From the "Weekly Sun," December 21st, 1910.*

THE TARIFF RESOLUTION.

The tariff demands of the organised farmers of Canada made to Sir Wilfrid Laurier on December 16th were in the following words:—

"This delegation, representative of the agricultural interests of Canada, desire to approach you upon the question of the bearing of the Canadian Customs tariff.

"We come, asking no favours at your hands. We bear with us no feeling of antipathy towards any other line of industrial life. We welcome within the limits of Canada's broad domain every legitimate form of industrial enterprise, but in view of the fact that the further progress and development of the agricultural industry is of such vital importance to the general welfare of the State, that all other Canadian industries are so dependent upon its success, that its constant condition forms the great barometer of trade, we consider its operations should no longer be hampered by tariff restrictions.

"And in view of the favourable approaches already made through President Taft and the American Government looking towards more friendly trade relations between Canada and the United States this memorial takes form as follows :

"1. That we strongly favour reciprocal Free Trade between Canada and the United States in all horticultural, agricultural and animal products, spraying materials, fertilisers, illuminating, fuel and lubricating oils, cement, fish, and lumber.

"2. Reciprocal Free Trade between the two countries in all agricultural implements, machinery, vehicles and parts of each of these; and, in the event of a favourable arrangement being reached, it be carried into effect through the independent action of the respective Governments, rather than by the hard and fast requirements of a treaty.

"3. We also favour the principle of the British preferential tariff, and urge an immediate lowering of the duties on all British goods to one-half the rates charged under the general tariff schedule, whatever that may be; and that any trade advantages given the United States in reciprocal trade relations be extended to Great Britain.

"4. For such further gradual reduction of the remain-

ing preferential tariff as will ensure the establishment of complete Free Trade between Canada and the Motherland within ten years.

"5. That the farmers of this country are willing to face direct taxation in such form as may be advisable to make up the revenue required under new tariff conditions.

"Believing that the greatest misfortune which can befall any country is to have its people huddled together in great centres of population, and that the bearing of the present Customs tariff has the tendency to encourage that condition, and realising also that in view of the constant movement of our people away from the farms, the greatest problem which presents itself to Canadian people to-day is the problem of retaining our people on the soil, we come doubly assured of the justice of our petition.

"Trusting this memorial may meet your favourable consideration, and that the substance of its prayer be granted with all reasonable dispatch.

"On behalf of the Canadian Council of Agriculture,

"(Sgd.) D. W. McCUAIG, President,

"(Sgd.) E. C. DRURY, Secretary."

—From the "*Grain Growers' Guide*," December 21st, 1910.

THE MEMORIAL.

The following memorial on the tariff was presented by Mr. Roderick McKenzie on behalf of the deputation:—

"When the people of Canada adopted the principle of Protection in their Customs tariff of 1876, it was with the clear understanding that when the protected industries had had time to develop and get firmly established the protection would be withdrawn and the people relieved of any further taxation for the benefit of industry. The election of 1896 was decided on this issue, and the people returned to power a Government committed to the elimination of the protective principle from the tariff, and the

placing of our Customs duty on a purely revenue basis. Although the tariff schedule of 1897 afforded some relief, the farmers of Canada were disappointed in the measure of relief afforded by it. Under the impression that the expected reduction was not to be abandoned by the Government, but only postponed, they deferred making any strong objection. The revision of 1907 largely disabused their minds in this respect, and, notwithstanding the strong representation made to the Tariff Commission which investigated the operation of the tariff previous to the revision of 1907, the schedules resulting, although providing for a small reduction in a few items, worked out, upon the whole, to afford more protection to the manufacturing industries.

"The tariff schedule of 1907 contains 711 items, 221 of which are free. Of these free items, farmers get the benefit of free binder twine, barbed wire, cream separators, and corn for feeding purposes. Practically all the other free items are raw material used by manufacturers in their manufactories. In addition to that, since the revision of 1907, some twenty items have been placed on the free list, and the duty reduced on thirteen others, by Order-in-Council. All these reductions have been on raw materials used by manufacturers. As farmers, we do not object to the principle of permitting raw material used by manufacturers to be imported free of duty. We believe that it is sound, and that the best interests of the community are served by permitting the manufacturer to get his raw material where he can get it cheapest, free from restrictions of any kind. But we do object to a tariff which, while giving them this just privilege, permits them to levy unjustly a heavy tribute off the people who use their goods by the higher prices they are enabled to charge through the power given them by the Customs tariff.

"Advocates of Protection base their conditions on the ground :—

"1. That the levying of Customs duties is the best method of collecting revenue to meet the requirements of the Government.

"2. That it affords labour for wage-earners, thus providing maintenance for centres of population in towns and cities.

"The method which has hitherto been pursued in this country of collecting revenue through Customs duties by virtue of which one group of individuals is placed in a position where they can levy toll upon their neighbours is inherently unsound. It is so, because it destroys the balance of equity in taxation. By virtue of what principle will you tax the farmer in order to give work to the working man? On what principle will you tax the working man in order to better prices to the farmers?

"Sir Richard Cartwright, than whom there is no better authority in Canada on statistics and fiscal questions, is credited with the statement, in 1893 : ' If you add together the sum that has been paid into the Treasury and the largest sum that has been extracted from the pockets of the people for the benefit of a few private and favoured individuals, you will find that the total for the last fourteen years is hardly less than \$1,000,000,000.'

"You, sir, have also been credited with a statement, made about the same time, that ' For every dollar that goes into the Dominion Treasury, two or three dollars go into the pockets of the manufacturers ' ; and almost every farmer in Canada will agree with you in this, even if some of them differ from you upon other public questions.

"According to the census of 1908, there were agricultural implements manufactured in Canada in the year previous to the value of \$12,835,745, of which \$2,342,826

worth were exported, leaving for the home consumption \$10,492,919. There were imported that year \$1,593,914 worth of implements, on which the Government collected a duty to the extent of 20 per cent., or \$318,782. It is now conceded that the manufacturer adds to the selling price of his commodity the total amount of the protection granted him by the Customs duty. The farmers of Canada thus paid the Government that \$318,782, and the manufacturers of farming implements \$2,098,383. Of leather we used, of domestic manufacture, \$13,394,416 worth; we imported \$901,197 worth, on which we paid a duty to the Government of \$157,709, and, through enhanced prices, paid the manufacturers \$2,344,022. Boots and shoes manufactured in Canada amounted to \$20,264,686. We imported \$1,178,749 worth, on which we paid the Government a duty of \$353,600, and paid the manufacturers \$6,079,405. Cement, an article that is now being used very extensively in Canada, practically every farmer who does any building making use of it to some extent, carried protection to the extent of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. In 1909 there was manufactured in Canada \$5,266,008 worth of cement. We imported \$475,676 worth, on which the Government collected a duty of \$159,077, and we paid the Canadian merger that controls the manufacture of that article \$1,755,336. The same thing applies to woollens, cottons, cutlery—but why go further? On these several items enumerated above, alone, the people pay a revenue to the Government of \$989,168, and the very large sum of \$12,277,146 into the treasury of the manufacturers of these commodities. The taxes paid by the people are approximately in the following proportion: For every \$100 farmers are taxed, by reason of Customs duty, on agricultural implements, the Government gets \$14 and the manufacturer \$86. On cement the Government gets \$8 and the manufacturers \$92. On

boots and shoes the Government gets \$6 and the manufacturers \$94.

"In the early days of the National Policy the taxes imposed by the Customs duty were modified to some extent by competition between domestic manufacturers. Of recent years they have practically eliminated that competition by the formation of mergers. The different companies engaged in the same line of manufacture have been absorbed by the larger companies. Since January, 1909, twenty industrial amalgamations have been consummated in Canada, absorbing 135 individual companies. While in each case the capitalisation of the merged concern is very much larger than the total capital of the absorbed companies, it is rarely that any of this additional capital enters into the business of the new concern. The huge capitalisation enables the organisation concerned to conceal from the general public, in a measure, the large tribute they are enabled to impose on the consumers of their manufactured goods by reason of the Customs duty.

"The argument is frequently made that the Government must maintain the present high Customs duty in order to protect capital invested in manufacturing industries. In other words, capital invested in agriculture must, by statute, be compelled to pay tribute to capital invested in manufacturing industries. On what principle of justice can a Government give a man who invests \$100,000 in any industry the privilege of levying a tax on ten men who invest \$10,000 each in land to develop the natural wealth of the country? It is often said by advocates of the protective system that we must maintain a Customs duty in order to encourage capital to come to Canada. This policy, maintained by our Government since 1878, has had a most detrimental effect on the development of agriculture, and the investment of capital in the pro-

duction of farm crops; and it is yearly becoming more apparent, due to the fact that money invested in securities yields a greater revenue than that invested in the industry of agriculture, that many of our most progressive farmers are disposing of their farms to come and live in the towns and cities, investing the proceeds of the sale of their land in other securities, endeavouring to supplement this by entering into competition with wage earners in these centres of population.

"According to the census of 1901, the total capital invested in the agricultural industry was \$1,787,102,630, not including working capital—that is, capital used. After deducting the charge of labour and rent, the surplus for the year's operations is placed at \$331,542,546, or 18.55 per cent. of the capital invested, allowing nothing for the working capital, the farmer's own labour, or that of the members of his family, or his raw material. Had the wages of the farmer and the adult members of his family been reckoned at the usual wage of a day labourer, there would have been nothing left for interest on this very large capital. On the other hand, the industry of manufacturing invested, including the working capital, a total of \$446,916,487. After allowing for the cost of raw material, the rent of offices and workrooms, the cost of wages and salaries, power, heat, fuel, light, taxes, totalling \$392,475, the surplus netted 19.82 per cent. of that capital. Speaking for the West, we have no hesitation in saying that this economic condition seriously affects progress in the development of farm lands. In the older districts, where land has made a rapid advance in price, farmers are disposing of their holdings and moving into the towns and cities, and investing the proceeds of their sale, as indicated above. In the majority of cases, although there are exceptions, the purchasers of these farms have only a limited capital, and frequently

the largest portion of the purchase money is carried on a mortgage. The increased cost of living and of conducting his operations, due to the exactions of a protective tariff, so disables him that there are often seasons when he can pay no more than the interest on his principal, which condition denies him the opportunities of culture and education that by right belong to him as much as to anyone else, besides preventing him from improving his holdings.

"The census of 1906 shows that in 1905 there were 122,398 farms in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The reports of the Department of the Interior indicate that up to June 30th, 1905, 199,978 homestead entries were made, and that year 112,779 patents were issued. In addition to this, for the three years previous to 1905, 72,129 entries were made for homesteads, indicating that, of the homestead entries and patents issued up until 1905, 62,000 have either disposed of their patents or did not take possession of their homesteads. Previous to that date there were disposed of by railway companies and others, who had received subsidies of land from the Government of Canada, upwards of 11,500,000 acres of land, a percentage of the purchasers of which would be securing the land for the purpose of making a home. So that the number above indicated as abandoning or selling their holdings would be very largely increased. During that period, which was one of the most successful periods that the West has ever experienced, the urban population in those three provinces increased in a much larger ratio than the rural population. In 1901 the ratio of urban to the total population was 24.72 per cent., and in 1906 it increased to 30.23 per cent. The ratio of the urban to the total population increased more in Manitoba than the two other provinces, although there was a marked increase in all three. The statement is

made that the increase in the urban and the decrease in the farm population in Ontario is largely due to the attractiveness of the fertile soil of the prairie farms. Yet, notwithstanding the many and great advantages that the prairie farm has over the farms in the older provinces, and notwithstanding the fact that practically the only resources of these western provinces is the product of the soil; in the face of all this, the urban population is growing more rapidly than the rural. The only logical reason that can be advanced for such an undesirable situation is that, owing to the high cost of living and the high cost of the necessary equipment, due very largely to the unjust tariff, the farmer finds it difficult to make both ends meet, and seeks to change his calling in the forlorn hope of doing better.

“The other argument, that the growth of towns and cities is dependent upon manufactories being established in these centres of population, is discredited in the experience of the Western provinces. Practically the only manufactories in these provinces are the establishments for the manufacture of food products, slaughter-houses and meat-packing houses, mills for the manufacture of lumber and timber products, printing and publishing houses—none of which are dependent for their existence on the maintenance of the protective system.

“The doctrine that manufacturing establishments cannot exist, and that cities and towns cannot prosper, without Protection is untenable. That the fathering policy of the National Policy has brought into existence manufactories in Canada may be admitted; but it is also true that the industries of that character, which have to be bolstered up at the expense of the people, while it may add to the wealth of individuals, adds nothing to the wealth of the nation. The census of 1906 gives the total of the products manufactured in Canada in establishments employing five

hands and over as \$706,446,578. The average duty on dutiable imports for 1905 was 27.692 per cent. If we assume that the manufacturers added this to the selling price of their products, amounting to upwards of \$706,000,000, the tribute they collected from the consumers of manufactured goods in Canada was, that year, upwards of \$190,740,000. The total salary paid by manufacturers in all Canada in 1905 was \$162,155,578, or upwards of \$28,000,000 less than the extra profit they made off the Canadian people on their manufactured products. In other words, if the people of Canada had paid all the salary of the employees of manufacturers for that year, they would still have had \$28,000,000 left to contribute to the revenue of the country from the excess price they had paid due to the tariff. But, further, the urban population in Canada in 1901 was 2,021,799. Of those, there were employed in manufacturing establishments 226,663 men over sixteen years of age, 61,220 women sixteen years and over, 12,143 children under sixteen years, or a total of 300,026 employees. The rest of the urban population who were engaged in the business of distributing, transporting, financial and other interests were in no way benefited by Protection in Customs duties.

"It is a foolish fallacy that our manufacturers in Canada depend for their existence on the continuance of a protective tariff. Our largest and most important industries that are classified as manufactories, such as establishments engaged in the production of food products, such as bakeries, butter and cheese factories, flour and grist mills, slaughtering and meat-packing establishments, fruit and vegetable canning, and various others which may be regarded as indigenous to Canada, may safely be depended upon as being quite capable of meeting any competition from outside sources if our markets were thrown open.

"As already stated, the tariff of 1897 afforded some relief, although the supporters of a lower tariff were disappointed that the reduction had not gone a good deal further. However, they rested on the assurance that a beginning was made, and that a decrease in the taxation of Customs duties would continue at intervals, and that the expected revenue tariff was not to be abandoned by the Government, but only postponed. After fourteen years of waiting, a careful study of the tariff schedule indicates that, due to a constant rise in value that began in 1896 on all classes of dutiable goods, the people are now actually paying more duty on the commodities they purchase than in 1896. In the interval, farmers and general consumers have been organising and getting familiar with the extent of the taxation imposed upon them by the tariff. They have observed that since the revision of 1907 the privileges granted to manufacturers under the Customs duty are being extended without any compensating relief to consumers. Many people are leaving older districts in the other provinces, some getting tired of urban life, and many also from older countries are endeavouring to establish themselves on the Western prairies.

"The larger proportion of them, having very little capital excepting their physical strength, and relying upon the products of their labour to build up for themselves homes on land so generously provided them by the Canadian Government, find that, through the exactions of transportation and the oppressive Customs tariff, the cost of building and maintaining a home is advanced from 25 to 30 per cent. That is to say, that for every dollar's worth of goods a farmer on his homestead has to buy, the Customs duty adds from 25 to 30 cents. The staple product of Western farms is wheat, and the purchasing power of a bushel of wheat is reduced 25 per

cent. by our fiscal system. The average price of wheat to the Western farmer this year will be, approximately, 75 cents per bushel. Seventy-five per cent. of the proceeds of the sale of wheat goes towards the purchase of home products and to farm improvements, every dollar of which is reduced in its purchasing power by 15 cents on account of the operation of the Customs duty.

“An argument that is commonly used is that Customs duty must be maintained in order to provide a revenue for furnishing transportation facilities for the distribution of farm crops, and that it is necessary, in order that the Government should continue to improve transportation facilities for the handling of the product of the Western prairies, to continue the present Customs duty; and that farmers, in resisting the imposition of these duties, are ungrateful, inasmuch as all the people of Canada are subject to these customs duties for the special benefit of the farming community in this respect. That the Government of Canada has in the past expended large sums of money in providing transportation facilities, all readily agree; but it must also be conceded by those who hold the views above stated that the general business of Canada receives just as much benefit from the development incident to providing proper transportation facilities for the newer districts as the farmers; and who derive more benefit from these improved transportation facilities than our manufacturers? Yet we find that they strenuously oppose contributing anything to the revenue from Customs duties on material they import. It is also put forth for an argument that the Government must continue the Customs duty to provide a revenue to still further improve the means of transportation from the Western prairies to the seaboard, by developing our canals, etc., and the argument is made that by so doing the price of Western grain will be enhanced from $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents to 2 cents per bushel. It seems

folly to continue a system which, as shown above, reduces the purchasing power of a bushel of wheat 15 cents in order that the Government may create conditions which will increase the price of a bushel of wheat from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 cents.

"The declared policy of the Government is to impose duty for revenue purposes, and that Protection is only incidental. The logical inference would be, therefore, that when, through the operation of the Customs duty, an article ceased to produce revenue to any extent, by reason of the domestic manufacturers getting complete control of the output, the Government should remove the protection; and, further, since the Government imposes Customs duties only for the purpose of producing revenue to meet the cost of Government, just as soon as there is a material and continued surplus from year to year the Government, if they would follow their declared policy, will reduce the Customs duty. Canada has reached that stage now. We have had for several years a very good surplus, which this year is stated to approximate to \$30,000,000. Why, inasmuch as the necessities of the revenue do not require the imposition of so much taxation, does the Government not carry out its declared policy of reducing the Customs duty to the requirements of revenue?"

"We attach hereto a list showing the revenue produced for the year ending March 31st, 1910, on articles which the farmers request to be placed on the free list. You will notice that the total revenue produced by the duty on agricultural implements—as classified in the Trade and Navigation Returns as "Agricultural Implements n.o.p."—amount to only \$529,299.48. This amount is quite insignificant when compared with the amount which the tariff schedule enables the implement manufacturer to impose on the farmer. The same applies to buggies and carriages. On cutters the revenue produced last year was \$328.65. There are a very large number of cutters used

in Canada, and all of them are increased in price by 35 per cent. on account of the Customs duty. On sleighs the duty collected by the Government was \$4,539.29. These are articles which every farmer in Canada uses, and on which he must pay to the manufacturer an addition in price of 35 per cent.

"The same applies to portable engines, threshing machines, and wagons. On all farming implements, including buggies, carriages and sleighs, threshing machines, etc., the Government collected duty to the amount of \$1,218,983.38. Leather is another article that we request to be placed on the free list, and from which the Government derives a very insignificant amount of duty, yet it imposes a very heavy tax on the people.

"Some of the other items which we request to be placed on the free list—such as coal—produce considerable revenue. Salt produces \$20,353. Were all these items enumerated in our resolution placed on the free list, the Government would lose, based on the revenue for the year ending March 31st, 1910, \$2,500,000; and should the British preference be increased to 50 per cent., the loss to the revenue, based on the importations of the fiscal year ending March 31st, 1910, would be, approximately, \$4,500,000. So that the total amount of revenue lost to the Government due to the reduction demanded by the farmers' resolution as set forth above would amount to, approximately, \$7,000,000. If, as is stated, the surplus this year will amount to \$30,000,000, it would still leave a surplus in the Treasury of upwards of \$23,000,000—a very respectable amount. So that the proposed reduction would in no way embarrass the Government in the conduct of the business of the country. Believing, as we do, that the provision for revenue by Customs duty is, economically and morally wrong, we desire that Free Trade be established between Britain and Canada in as short a

time as possible without unduly disarranging existing business conditions. We therefore ask that the British preference be increased all round, at the present session, to 50 per cent., and that an additional increase of 10 per cent. each year be given until we have Free Trade between Britain and Canada. We do not ask for any preference in the British market for our products in return, since we regard Free Trade between Canada and Great Britain as being in the best interests of the development of Canada; nor do we suggest or desire that Britain should tax foreign food-stuffs for our benefit. A certain section of the Canadian people loudly proclaim their loyalty and attachment to the British Empire. Apparently their loyalty consists in raising a tariff wall against British manufacturers that will enable the Canadian manufacturers to impose a tribute on the rest of the Canadian people, and, as an offset to the producers of food products in Canada, that a tax should be placed by the British people on their food-stuffs from foreign lands. In other words, their loyalty consists in having the British manufacturer taxed in the interest of the Canadian manufacturer, and the food-stuffs of the British artisan taxed for the benefit of the Canadian farmer. Canadian farmers recognise the protection afforded our country by the Motherland, and they are willing to do their part in the maintenance of the British Empire by supplying the British people with the food products they require in open competition with any other country in the world. If our own Government will relieve the unjust tax imposed upon Canadian farmers by the Customs duty, they would be quite able to compete in the British market with any other country in the world in the supply of cereals and farm products.

"In asking for these changes in our Customs tariff, we believe that we have asked for nothing but what is just and what is in the interest of the best development of our

country. Our farmers have been the pioneers in the development of the land. They have come from the frontiers of civilisation when the road was dark and discouragements were great; they have struggled against monopoly in many of its phases; they have found it necessary to organise, and have their organisation as perfect as possible. The farmers present here to-day have come at great expense. They have done so because they desired their wishes to be made known at the fountain-head where our laws are made. They represent 50,000 of the best farmers of this Dominion, and can justly claim to represent the farming industry of this country. We make our requirements as reasonable men. Whether they are granted by this Parliament or not, the educational work will still go on; and the principles we have outlined here must ultimately triumph. Our country is in the infancy of its development. It is our duty, and the duty of the representatives who sit within these walls, to see that special privilege is afforded to none, and that our laws are based on justice alone to all. The farmers of Canada desire that the principle underlying our laws should be that contained in the words of one of the greatest Americans of the last century: 'That we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us; that we should respect their rights as scrupulously as we would have our rights respected is not a mere counsel of perfection to individuals, but it is the law to which we must conform social institutions and national policy if we would secure the blessings of abundance and peace.'"

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